

Getting the most out of the Public Services Network

Five steps to positive change

Few people that work in the public sector need reminding that we're living through a period of almost unprecedented austerity. Budgets are being squeezed across all departments. The Comprehensive Spending Review has mandated that spending must be reduced in the region of £390m over the next three years in central government alone.

Of all the ideas that have been put forward to meet this challenge, the Public Services Network (PSN) is one of the most innovative and far-reaching. PSN aims to substantially reduce the cost of communication services across UK Government. This will be achieved through one logical network, based on industry standards, and a more open and competitive ICT marketplace at the heart of the UK public sector.

But while a lot of the talk about PSN has been focused on rationalisation, it would be a mistake to think that this initiative is only about cost cutting. On the contrary: PSN is just as much about enabling new joined-up public services for the benefit of citizens.

For many public sector organisations, this is going to be the real challenge. Because getting the most out of PSN is not just about adopting a new framework for procurement. It's about creating a cultural shift that will bring lasting and positive change to the way government works.

In this how-to guide, we suggest key areas you can focus on to help bring about this change.



Key PSN challenges

Delivering significant **cost savings**

Embracing **a new approach** to shared public services

Enabling a better and more **joined-up experience for citizens**

Managing significant **structural and cultural change**

“PSN is a fantastic enabler. It really opens the way for much more flexibility in the way we deliver services to citizens and businesses in the future.”

Craig Eblett, Programme Director for PSN



PSN presents a long term opportunity for us all to change the way public services are delivered. It's not a quick fix, but there are some broad areas you can start focusing on now to achieve lasting and positive change.

1	Think beyond simple procurement savings	PSN is a framework for buying communications services that will save you money. It creates a more competitive and open marketplace. It enables you to share infrastructure and networks with other organisations in a way that will reduce your costs. Think how a better way of working – e.g. sharing facilities with other services in your region – could also help you reduce big overheads like property leases.
2	Think citizen first	Improving service delivery often means examining existing manual processes to see how you can make them more efficient (for example, by replacing paper forms with data collection via mobile devices). PSN is an opportunity for change that demands a different approach. Try adopting a lean methodology that considers citizen needs first. By working this way you can find new ideas to optimise citizen-focused output. And then use PSN to find a creative and more flexible solution to your challenge.
3	Combine forces for the common good	PSN is mandated for central government. Yet many believe local government could be the driving force that makes PSN a success. Already we are seeing examples of police forces, councils and healthcare providers talking about sharing resources and infrastructure – not just to reduce property costs, but to improve the way services are delivered. This is the time to think differently, get round the table with other regional service providers and see how you can innovate in ways that have a truly positive impact on society.
4	Make sure you manage the cultural shift	Introducing better and more flexible ways of working through PSN services will inevitably mean managing a cultural transformation – but this doesn't need to be as daunting as it sounds. Think how your people work today, how efficient new processes might change that, and how you will re-evaluate and measure their roles in a new PSN-enabled world. The long-term aim should be to move performance metrics away from traditional factors like attendance and focus them more on outcome.
5	Take the long-term view	PSN addresses old problems associated with siloed systems and regular technology refreshes through one logical network based on industry standards. A such, PSN services are much more likely to grow with you as your needs change. Take a holistic look at how you can use technology to optimise the productivity of your people, buildings and other resources. This will take you way beyond a two year plan. In fact you will build five and ten year plans that are likely to achieve real and lasting change.



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